

VOICES *of* VETERANS

TEXAS VETERANS LAND BOARD

Winter 2010



My Fellow Veterans:

Five generations of my family have served in times of war. As a former Marine and Vietnam veteran, I know every veteran has a story to tell. The Texas Veterans Land Board *Voices of Veterans™* program wants to find and preserve as many of these important oral histories as possible. Through these stories of bravery, fear and fellowship, our future generations of Texans can learn lessons not found in any textbook – like what it means to sacrifice for a cause greater than yourself, and how to face adversity against great odds. Free to any Texas veteran, the *Voices of Veterans™* program provides a lasting legacy for historians, friends and family members, and helps us to honor and remember the sacrifices of all Texas veterans.



Semper Fi,

JERRY PATTERSON,
Chairman
Texas Veterans
Land Board

Veteran Spotlight: An Interview with Pastor Floyd Perry

Pastor Floyd Perry served with Mike Company, 3d Battalion 1st Marines in Vietnam in 1967. His unit saw extensive combat in a very hostile and deadly land that few had heard of prior to the mid-1960s. As an infantryman who often walked in front of his patrol, or "on point," Perry's life was often in great jeopardy. On one occasion he fearlessly exposed himself to intense enemy fire four different times as he helped to carry wounded fellow Marines to safety. For his actions he was awarded the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart. Today, Pastor Perry serves as a minister in Houston and remains closely involved with helping his fellow veterans. In the following excerpts he shares with us some of his memories from his time in the service.



Pastor Floyd Perry, seated front right, joins fellow Marine veterans at the Mike Company, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment reunion in Las Vegas in 2009.

On going to Vietnam

"Well you know, being a young Marine, you're always eager. The thing that I had in my mind was like I had a friend of mine, and he was kind of scared. And he said I don't think I'll be coming back. And I used to tell him to get away from me, because I got a roundtrip ticket in my back pocket, and I said I'm coming back."

WWW.VOICESOFVETERANS.ORG

WHY ORAL HISTORY?



Nothing is more powerful than the spoken word. Imagine if we could listen to the stories of heroes such as David Crockett, Sam Houston, and Stephen F. Austin in their own words.

Thanks to digital technology, we can now record the special memories of today's heroes and share them with future generations of Texans.

"The Voices of Veterans program serves as a living monument to honor the sacrifices of all veterans."

the men and women on the frontlines are often overlooked. Stories of courage, fear, fellowship and inspiration are lost with every passing year.

The Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans program wants to record these stories to remind future Texans that ordinary men and women, when faced with adversity, can accomplish extraordinary things. The Voices of Veterans program serves as a living monument to honor the sacrifices of all veterans.

Military history often highlights stories of major battles, equipment or famous leaders. Yet, the stories of

On his first patrol

"The very first time I went out on patrol walking point, the VC blew a bomb in the middle of our squad, and you know, I was walking point, so he let me get by and my first fire team get by, and then he blew it in the middle of the squad. So when I hit the ground, I was looking for somebody to shoot, but there wasn't nobody to shoot, and we heard the groans and the moans of the people back there, and so we formed a perimeter and we called in a medevac and we got them out, but one of the guys that I had

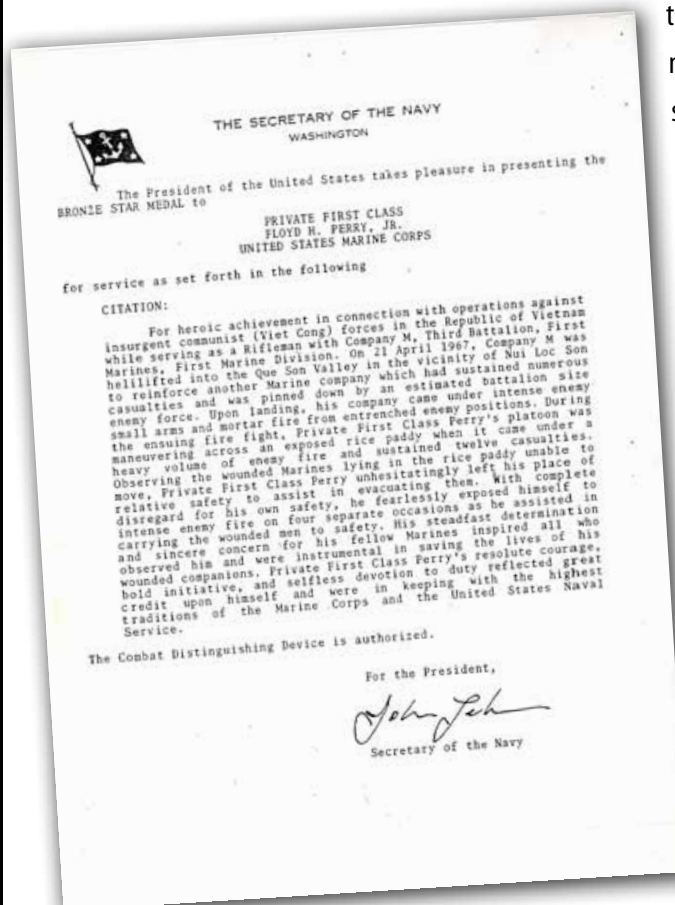
came up on the ship with me, he took a piece of shrapnel through the chin, and it took out the top of his head. And the reason why I remember that so clearly is because we had just congratulated him on having a baby boy, and me being 18 years old, this was my very first experience. Man, I cried like a baby. But I had a sergeant, Aden McGee. Let me tell you about

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And I used to tell him to get away from me, because I got a roundtrip ticket in my back pocket, and I said I'm coming back.

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this Irishman. This Irishman walked up to me and slapped the tar out of me. And I had my rifle in my hand, and he slapped the tar out of me, and he told me this—he said the only reason why you're crying is because you're so glad it wasn't you. And I'm going to tell you something, I dried my tears and I never cried for another dead body over there, and I carried them for days. But that was the reality of the situation."





Pastor Perry (center) and Quinn Allen (right) present Greg Tracy (left) of the Veterans Administration with copies of a Mike Co 3/1 Memorial Book and unit citations for the Houston VA Medical Center.

On his Bronze Star

"We were on call in case they needed some reinforcements anywhere. And that's how we got into Operation Union. One unit was almost totally annihilated, and they needed help and so we got on the birds and we went to the rescue, but we ended up getting blown away. I remember it well because they gave me a Bronze Star and a Combat V because I helped evacuate the wounded that were pinned down. I was 18 years old. I didn't even know what a Bronze Star and Combat V was. And if it wasn't for Aden McGee telling me to come on the hill, I probably wouldn't have got it. But he told me to follow him and do what he did, and I did. I just followed him and helped him evacuate the guys."

On continuing his call to serve

"I started pastoring 10 years ago. I retired from the railroad, and I started working with veterans. I'm involved in three organizations. One is called the Gathering of the Eagles—that is a group of veterans organizations here in Houston, and we meet twice a month to talk about the new things that are going on with veterans. It's 26 different groups. So that's good. And then I'm with the Homeless Veteran Burial Program. I've had the privilege of burying 65 homeless vets. And I also work with Linda Green at the D. George Hotel as a chaplain down there for those homeless guys. I also work with the veterans cemetery committee here in Houston, and we have a beautiful cemetery here."

**THANKS TO
VOICES OF
VETERANS
SPONSOR
TEXAS VFW.**

How It Works

1

Complete and mail the screening form at the end of this newsletter.

Let us know you're ready to tell your story.

2

Introduction by phone.

When we get your contact info, our staff will call to chat about your story. This helps us organize our work and lets us know more about you.

3

Set an interview date.

Once approved, the staff will work with you and our volunteer interviewer to pick the best day for your interview.

4

Tell your story.

Either by phone or in person, a typical Voices of Veterans interview lasts 1 to 2 hours.

5

Add pictures if you want.

Please feel free to send us copies of wartime photos, documents or other memorabilia to enrich your story.

6

Proof your interview.

You will have a chance to review and edit the transcript of your interview for accuracy. We want to get it right.

7

Get your story on CD.

You will receive a free transcript and 4 free audio CDs of your interview, along with a frameable certificate.

"And during the first two missions that I went on, you see your first gory details of what combat is really like there and you find out the war was 80 percent boredom and 20 percent sheer terror."

Fred Castaneda, U.S. Army

*On his service in Vietnam with the 82nd Airborne.
Interviewed on June 18, 2010.*

"When we arrived in Japan, we were the first Americans into this particular area, and you couldn't find anybody in Japan who had ever been in the armed forces. It was all a subdued nation and there was bowing and scraping and they were super afraid of any Americans or any Allied troops. So, we were treated like kings."

Dr. James Cooper, U.S. Navy

On being part of the occupation force of the newly conquered Japan. Interviewed on May 5, 2010.

"As we were coming ashore, the Canadians were coming ashore and the tide was coming up and they were drowning, and they were on the wrong beach. They were supposed to have been way down somewhere, so the American Navy boys were trying to pick 'em up. And they had this officer standing there with his swagger stick, get ashore! Get ashore! And they were drowning. And the boys that saw that, that's still in our minds."

Robert Pryor, U.S. Army

*On taking part in the D-Day landing at Normandy.
Interviewed on July 14, 2010.*

"We had a long field right next to the 7th Marine Division cemetery and a couple of times they had air raids and we'd go and get off the field. We got to dig some holes, but it was fun to do something that wasn't connected with the service. We were just playing baseball."

Wayne Terwilliger, U.S. Marines

On taking a break to play baseball after the fighting was over on Tinian. Terwilliger would later go on to play Major League Baseball. Interviewed on October 23, 2009.

On his faith

"I had been saved, and yes, I believed in Jesus Christ even then. It helped my conduct. Now you know in war, there is still conduct. There are things you do and things you don't do. You know, I tell the story of this one time I'll mention. I was running through a village. I was a point man, and we were told when you go through the field, the bomb shelters, the VC sometimes hide in the bomb shelters, and we were told toss a grenade in it. And so I was running through there, I had pulled the pin on my grenade, but when I looked, I saw mama san, and four little baby sans in there, and I put that pin back in the grenade and kept going. See, that's the kind of thing that will save your mind, you know what I'm saying?"

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... he said the only reason why you're crying is because you're so glad it wasn't you. And I'm going to tell you something, I dried my tears and I never cried for another dead body over there, and I carried them for days. But that was the reality of the situation.

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**EVERY VETERAN
HAS A STORY TO TELL.
TELL US YOURS.**



I WANT TO TELL MY STORY.

In order to help us learn more about you and your service record, please complete this screening form to the best of your knowledge. Thank you.

(Mr.) (Mrs.)

Your Name

(Mr.) (Mrs.)

Spouse or Other Contact Name

Street Address

City

State

Zip Code

Home Phone

Cell Phone

Other Phone

FAX

E-mail address

Service Branch:

Last Rank:

to

Dates of Service (e.g., 1946 to 1951)

Conflict / Theater of Operations

Significant Battles / Missions

Awards/Medals

Significant Battles / Missions

Awards/Medals

Other Items of Interest

Please mail form to:
Texas Veterans Land Board, P.O. Box 12873, Austin TX 78711-9788.
Or you may fax it to 512-475-1415.
Call 800-252-VETS (8387) for more info.